S: Balandier--96 E-5 (1946-1961) 1956 F919 Fang F919

184 revolutionary part of Fang magic. One may see a kind of "fixation" of feelings of aggressiveness and individuality which are thwarted by the sentiments imposed by tradition (1) (the nsêm is

1. The English anthropologist G. Lienhardt analyses the Dinka magic in "Some Notions of Witchcraft among the Dinka," Africa, Vol. 21, No. 4, October, 1951.

tolerated so long as there is no evidence of his harmful activity). One must also recognize in the nsêm a means of differentiation, an internal source of profound changes (2). The bôkêm are the

2. For the role of differentiation played by witchcraft, cf. G. Davy, La Foi jurée [Sworn Faith], 1922. On this role and on the transformations of the social organization, "the margin of liberty," born of the conflicts between the religious clan and magic brotherhoods, cf. G. Gurvitch, La Vocation actuelle de la Sociologie [Real [or Present-day] Vocation of Sociology], ch. 7, especially pp. 412, 438, 503, 523-524.

elements that carry on the most violent and the most lasting disputes with the total society. However, the attitude of this society toward them is ambiguous. The distinction between a "good" and a "bad" évur, while both are dangerous to a normal man, proves this. They create a necessary threat.

IV. Relations between the Sexes and the Generations, and the System of Interdicts

182 The present-day study of Fang society, as we will show in the next chapter, reveals two types of outstanding problems, those connected with the change in relations between men and women

(symbolized by the expression "our women have become unruly"), and those connected with the change of typical relations between generations. There is no doubt that the morphological changes affecting the groupings -- splintering, mobility of individuals, abnormal sex ratio -- and the process of economic development have conditioned these phenomena. Nevertheless, it is equally true that specifically Fang internal conditions explain the acuteness of the resulting problems.

562 Oral tradition is significant on the traditional relations between the sexes. According to this, woman appears to be primarily regarded in terms of her fertility: "Go find your women and populate the earth," [148] says Nzame to the first man; (1) and in terms of

1. H. Trilles, "Proverbes, Légendes et Contes Fang [Fang Proverbs, Legends, and Tales]," Legend of the Nsas, op. cit.

her usefulness: "Old woman, worn out calabash," asserts a proverb. She is shown to be subject to man ("I am nothing before a man, I am as stupid as a hen," says another proverb) and protected by him, who remains essentially "a warrior" in the ancient society. The few extant ethnographic studies have emphasized this lesser position. In his works dating from the beginning of the century, Father Trilles writes: "The girl is not considered as a "member" of the tribe." (2) E. Trezenem confirms this in a more recent account:

2. Father H. Trilles, Le totémisme chez les Fang [Totemism Among the Fang], note, p. 109.

The woman "is considered hardly more than a domestic animal..."(3)

3. Op. cit., p. 89.

At the same time, in an apparently contradictory manner, most of the early documents express surprise at the inordinate importance which seems to be placed on the woman, who is found at the source of numerous palavers, Let us add that the Fang woman was

541 them various interdicts that testify to his new state and remind
578 him of the obligation to submit to those who have made him a
885 man, a complete Fang. (1)

1. Cf. M. Briault, op. cit., pp. 183-184.

541 For a long time he submits to this superiority of his elders,
885 who intervene with the ancestors, the source of prosperity and
888 power, who permit him to fulfill and increase himself by marriage and the possession of posterity, by controlling the circulation of bride prices and women. Thus the male life curve reaches a maximum which corresponds to the social influence of the nyambeb, decreases as old age approaches (we have already stressed the tendency in the past to discard the "grandfather," mvam), and increases infinitely after death, which gives him the quality of "ancestor" with limitless power on behalf of the living. Childhood and old age, representing the "low" points of this curve, are preparation for the two "high" states which are characterized by an increase in power and autonomy.

541 In ancient Fang society dependence guaranteed material
578 and spiritual security. It was centered on the relation between
● 182 the begetter (daa) and the begotten (émò wôm) rather than on that between the dominating one and the one dominated. We have frequently stressed the leveling tendency existing in the heart of the nd'ê bot and the dangers threatening any pre-eminence acquired by personal right. The just distribution of women, wealth, and tasks is expected from the "eldest," not any domination. In another respect, during the period of conquest, attempts at domination and the establishment of excessive personal power were limited by the important role of the "warrior" (who best incarnates the qualities which caused Dr. Cureau to compare the Fang to "modern Spartans") and the threats of rupture in the heart of a grouping which needed to remain sufficiently large and coherent. An equilibrium may arise between the power of the "eldest ones" (religious and political pre-eminence) and the power of the young men (martial pre-eminence). It involves particularly the rigid regulation of the circulation of the women, the possibility for these

541 young men to go beyond the level of simple dependence to be-
578 come, in their turn, creators of dependence, and the possibility
● 162 [154] of "capitalizing" human lives (women and descendants).
This equilibrium has been upset and competition disorganized by the passage from warlike to economic conquest, then to an agricultural economy in which the woman plays a fundamental part, and the pacification which no longer permits the lack of women to be remedied by raids. Capitalization of women and capitalization of property are then bound together, the former becoming to a great extent the condition of the latter. The role of the "rich" man (nkumakuma) is increasing: (1) relations be-

1. To such an extent that Bertaut notes that among the Cameroons Boulou, who have been longer subject to a modern economy, there is only one word nkuma to designate the chief of village groupings.

tween generations, between "eldest sons" and "younger sons," may become that between possessors (women, property, and political role) and nonpossessors. Dependence tends to take on the characteristics of a domination creating tensions and conflicts.

784 We have been able to define a certain number of points of
626 equilibrium in the heart of ancient Fang society. We must now specify the important position held by the system of interdicts (biki) in social control. According to M. Briault the word éki (plural, biki) comes from the root ki meaning: "force, restraint, virility, power"; it expresses a ritual prohibition, an interdict or taboo; it designates "a person or thing marked with a sacred character with whom or with which contact or use are forbidden." This author considers the éki essentially from the point of view of the restraint they exercise and of the social order which they help to maintain. He writes: "They give rather the idea of an effective means of keeping youth, women ... in short, all in the society who are made to obey, in a spirit of subjection to those whose will is of importance ... political interest is doubled and made

245 [SR 552] distribution of cacao plantations is neither the only nor perhaps the principal cause of inequality. Cacao production is on a considerable scale: around 30, 000 tons in the Cameroons, 3, 000 tons in Gabon(4).

[423]

4. Almost the whole of the Gabon output comes from the Woleu-N'Tem region and especially the Ntoumou cantons. (P. A.)

It is easy to understand that this crop is an essential factor in the
• 182 evolution /sic/ of Paloulin society.

245 In the field of common law, for example, cacao has affected the orientation of land law. By giving each person the possibility of making /32/ private profits, cacao has increased the independence of men and even of women from family authority. Because it allows the accumulation of durable and tranferable goods, cacao has raised, in a new form, the problem of successional devolution /inheritance/.

To consider only the realm of technology: settling on the land during several generations has apparently put an end to real nomadism; villages are no longer moved about. But a certain amount of shifting cultivation will remain inevitable if some method of rapid reclamation of fallow land is not adopted.

245 The stock of tools has increased considerably. An axe with a small, 42 narrow head ending in a tongue was fastened into the large end of a wooden handle, a daba similarly made but with a rounder head and lighter handle (1) and a machete were formerly the basic implements.

[204]

1. The tongue of the hoe, driven into a branch like a spike, is also bound to it with liana. Old women still use the digging stick, which has or had some ritual significance. (P. A.)

To these must now be added pruning shears, caterpillar destroyer or a local copy, and cacao spear.

245 Boxes or baskets provide vats for fermenting the /cacao/ beans, a roof shades the trays on which they are put to dry. Some men have thought of buying Vermorel vaporizers for spraying the cacao trees; others dream of mowing machines for clearing the land.

Gabon have given priority to recreating the regrouping of villages being supposed, in their view, to take place as a function of the regrouping of the meyaŋ.

The ayaŋ includes all the patrilineal descendants of a common ancestor, the illegitimate children of girls belonging to the ayaŋ, and adopted ones. The ayaŋ has a name, a tattoo mark (ndon), often certain prohibitions (biŋɛ, biki), and perhaps a totem. The most strict exogamy is the rule. All members call themselves brothers (bəbeyaŋ).

Although there was, properly speaking, no real political division corresponding to the ayaŋ, nor any organized chiefship—explicable particularly in view of the very scattered settlement pattern of the members—clan sentiment was, and still is, very strong. Periodical meetings, binsian, bring ayaŋ members together, presided over by the eldest (nɛ̀ɛ̀) of the senior lineage (mvɔ̀k, ayɔ̀m) (3). The custom

3. Ayɔ̀m probably has the same root as nɔ̀m, pl. beyɔ̀m = male; it should be remarked that the ayɔ̀m is often designated by the name of a female ancestor.

of these binsian has recently been revived /46/, first in the Cameroons, where the native authority was reorganized in 1945-48 along clan lines, then in Gabon, where the meyaŋ are in an advanced state of disintegration, above all in the south.

An ayaŋ, whose villages separated one from the other by villages of other clans sometimes extend over several hundred kilometers, is divided into segments (mvɔ̀k) that include the descendants of the brothers, or rather the sons, of the clan ancestor, then /is divided/ into lineages (bisa, meyɔ̀m) derived from the descendants of the sons of the ancestor of the segment. The longer the genealogy (mvam, niaŋ bimvam; meba'a), the more vague these categorical differences become: in one place mvɔ̀k is used for what is called ɛ̀sa nearby and ayɔ̀m further away. But, except in southern Gabon, the genealogies are still well preserved, and the majority of adults can trace their relationship, if not to the clan ancestor himself, at least to his lineage. The teaching of these genealogies, which was the core of the traditional training of boys, is dying out with the spread of schooling, but children still know at least the genealogy of their village-family (jal, dzal; nda bɔt).

level that the agencies of authority, of social control, are most in evidence.

The head of the family is the senior, nnôm or nnôm mbôt, of the adult and active men, beaya bôñ, "the true men." He is not necessarily the oldest in age, because infirm old men suffer a genuine capitis diminutio /a loss of status/. The founder of the hamlet or his oldest son can still, even if infirm, preserve a certain moral authority as father, ésa, of the family, but actual authority will then be delegated to a nye mbôt chosen from his brothers, sons, or nephews, the élo'olo (bursar). In principle, a jal is composed of the founder, his old relatives /parents/, his younger brothers, his children and those of his sisters, his unmarried sisters, their illegitimate children and those of his daughters. Wives do not belong to the jal; their village is referred to as jal. Of a divorced woman one would say, a beya jal, "she has gone back to her village." The size of the nda bot depends upon different factors: security, the /family/ head's authority, the fertility of the soil, etc. I have already pointed out how several mal can be gathered into a nlam, a proper village. Nowadays the menda me bot are tending to decrease numerically and no longer to correspond to the jal, which can from now on combine several /menda me bot/. The limited or household family is becoming more and more important, while the government-sponsored institution of village chiefship /chefferie/, although it is often only an imperfect substitute for the authority of the nnôm or the ésa, undermines that none the less. The size of an average nda bot may be calculated at twenty /49/ persons (including the wives who do not belong to the jal), less in the towns and among the less prosperous people, more among large planters and the influential (minkukum).

The nda bot used to be a religious, military, and economic unit. On the religious plane, the father, ésa, was the custodian of the biéti (Fang, biéri), the portable altar or ark of the ancestral cult containing the skulls of the ancestors; he made the decisions about initiations and bore their expense. The initiations have died out, and the missions have burned dozens, if not hundreds, of biéri. Security and colonial order have removed any interest in the ésa's military function. Only his economic role survives to some extent. He used to be the sole owner of the family goods (biôm), sole treasurer of income, and sole regulator of expenditures, of which the most important was the payment of "bride prices" (minsuba) for his younger brothers and his

sons. When cacao was introduced, cultivation was done collectively by the nda hôt, with the ɗaa selling the produce and taking charge of the money. The younger generation quickly tired of this state of affairs and left their families in order to have plantations of their own. In addition, the inflation of land values from the growing of export crops led to division upon the death of the ɗaa and brought on the splintering of the nda hôt. This had never been very stable, even before the colonial period, but the cessation of military needs made possible a precocious "swarming off," which had not occurred before except when a new nda hôt was large enough to provide for its own defense.

In spite of this disintegration, jal and nda hôt remain the basic units of Pahouin life, more so than the ayoŋ. Development of private property notwithstanding, there does exist a juridical community with collective responsibility and obligatory self-help among its members. Many young people denounce this (cf. Eza Boto, Ville cruelle /Cruel City/, no. 182) and partly leave the jal in order to escape. But that is futile because the ties spread throughout the country become closer at a distance /from the jal/ and because the solidarity of the extended family is probably even stronger among emigrants than among stay-at-homes.

d. The Limited or Household Family; Kinship

The limited or household family, composed of an economically independent man, his wife, his children, sometimes old relatives /parents/, unmarried brothers and sisters, is becoming more and more important, both within the nda hôt framework and outside it. The missions have contributed a good deal to this, especially at the outset of evangelical activity, in order to separate the catechumens from their still animistic minlô mi hôt (they incline to react in the opposite direction nowadays to fight against "destructive individualism"). But economic changes have also played an important part. The household family is the unit of the migrant petty official, of the small-scale planter. There is no word for it; people say either mone nda hôt, "little extended family," or simply nda, "house."

Purely for convenience I shall discuss kinship on this level, in terms of an adult married man. /50/